

The New Sheridan Club

Newsletter

XIV

The Editor Writes...

And so Time moves remorselessly forward, propelling us to the part of year when the same five songs are heard throughout every corner of the land, the streets are paved with rabid shoppers, jollity is enforced and it rains just that little bit more.

But fear not! The New Sheridan Club remains a bastion in these dark days. There may be 30 odd days left to Christmas but there are far fewer to the New Sheridan Club Christmas Party and all that entails. Which in this case includes murder, mystery, mince pies, Miss Marple, merlot, Moriarty, mistletoe, martinis and perhaps Martini-Henries.

For the latest ticker tape information, have a gander at www.newsheridanclub.co.uk. For those of a more technological bent, you can also help spread the word by becoming a “friend” of the NSC in its “myspace” incarnation at www.myspace.com/newsheridanclub. There is also a “facebook” page but how you get there I have no idea.

We dare not vouch for those who link to these pages but most of them seem to be good eggs.

The Next Meeting

The next Meeting of the New Sheridan Club will take place on Wednesday 5th December 8pm–11pm, upstairs at The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place, London W1T 1JB.

The Turn this month will be RN who will boggle our minds with *A History of the BBC World Service*. Turn up and tune your ears in to what should be a riveting talk.

The November Meeting

With the grim shade of pestilence stalking the land and sadly rendering Mr Bridgman-Smith incapable of delivering his Turn *The Martini—A Brief History with Some Fascinating Facts, a Martini Analogy and an Answer to That All-Important Question, To Stir Or To Shake?* the NSC appeared to be without entertainment.

Noble Captain Coppice offered to dive on this grenade and do a Turn himself but the Club could not rustle up the necessary magic lantern, screen and human blood that he required. However, our Chairman rose from his contemplative slumber/post lunch stupor and stepped into the breach.



The New Sheridan Club traditionally meets in the upstairs room of the Wheatsheaf pub just off Oxford Street. The Wheatsheaf is one of Fitzrovia's historic pubs, a one time haunt of Dylan Thomas, George Orwell, Augustus John and Julian Maclaren-Ross. In fact Thomas met his wife Caitlin in here and, legend has it, he was known to flash at women in here as well. Fitzrovia's associations with literature go back to the eighteenth century. In the twentieth century both Woolf and Shaw lived in Fitzroy Square, Pound and Lewis launched Blast! at the Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel in Percy Street. John Buchan lived in Portland Place and in The Thirty Nine Steps Richard Hannay has a flat there. Both Lawrences (D. H. and T. E.) took rooms here, as did Aleister Crowley, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke and Katherine Mansfield.

Mr Arbuthnot delivered a spiffing monologue about writer and dandy Julian MacLaren-Ross and, in particular, all the pubs he used to haunt along Rathbone Place, including the very one in which we were standing. It really brought home the long and illustrious history of drinkers who have haunted our own Club Room over the years and connected us to a nearly disappeared past. If the NSC can provide such great and informative entertainment at the drop of half a dozen hats just imagine what we are capable of with planning!

We have rescheduled the good Mr Bridgman-Smith for a slot in the New Year, should he be out of his iron lung by then.



ESSAYS OF NOTE AND WORTH

A Letter From The Colonies

Club Member and inveterate adventurer Dr Leavingsoon writes from far-flung New Zealand...

I had a horse once.

Yes, a genuine, too-old-to-make-

glue, too-slow-to-ride, too-swaybacked-to-sit-on horse. Laden down with furs and the remnants of my grub and kit after a six month forced camp in the rain forest a fortnight's march North of Karamea. (Readers will have to use Google Earth or an Atlas.)

Popped in to see some old friends—who politely gave me a bath before even talking to me and gave me an over-sized old pair of pants to replace the shorts that had turned into a short kilt from crotch rot—and next day I started on the journey South along the Karamea Westport road. On foot. My boots had holes in them and I had to keep replacing a cardboard cut-out sole where it had worn through to the road. Frankly, even though I had had a decent meal and been kindly given credit by the store to replenish my supplies (being a “once-local”), I was sick of walking. Rubbing down “Grey” one night by the side of the road I was so completely dishevelled by it all I vented my anger futilely and violently on the sandfly and mosquito populations that were lining up at my blood bank.

Eventually, four days later, I descended the 357-metre Karamea Bluff, passed Seddonville and, on the fifth day, trudged into Granity. Tied

the hack to the front post, traded five pelts for a dozen ales with the publican and showed him how to make leather. A bloke had been watching me and decided to introduce himself. He was the local engineer for a coal mine near by and seemed a nice enough bloke. We yarned about traps and possums and the bush and dogs and horses—in fact when we got to horses he seemed rather keen on the idea. Well, I was going to give the old girl away when I got to Westport and I was sick of walking—could I cadge a lift in exchange? He'd go me one better was his response and we left for more beers to walk round to his house where he showed me a most interesting Land Rover collection.

"I'll swap you this series 1 Land Rover for that horse, mate. It's a bit tired and I've no need for it—already got another one. I've been meaning to use a hack for some time now..."

"Done!"

And so I clattered out of Granity with a dilapidated jalopy, utterly proud of my new ownership papers and knowing darkly that somehow I had been had!

Got stopped by the cops outside of Westport, with a full tank of gas, fresh supplies, shaven face, flash haircut, a few hundred dollars and a map of the South Island, on my way to Christchurch.

"No warrant of fitness or rego."

"Just bought her—taking her to Southern 4WD in Christchurch for repairs."

"Why can't you do it here?"

Ominously, there was no question mark after his query.

"Live in Christchurch. Picked it up."

Things were looking pretty good for me just then. A bit unfortunate that one of the windscreen panes decided to pick that moment to fall out...

His look made me confess all; that I

had swapped a horse for it, that there was nowhere in Westport that had the parts I needed, that the money in my wallet and the gear in the back was all I had in the world to show for six months of extreme hardship and that I wanted to get to Christchurch to start a career in music. A few confirming phone calls later back at the station he put down his expression and picked up a new one.

"Listen, I'm not going to book you this time. But you can't take that truck to Christchurch."

"But—"

"Hold on. Do you know Cobden at all?"

"Across the river from Grey-mouth?" I asked.

"That's the place. When you get to the bridge carry straight on down to the beach. The road will dog-leg right and, when you see all the Land Rovers, pop in there and get the parts you need."

I was struck dumb for a second. Then I started shaking hands enthusiastically.

"Thanks very much!"

"Either you're the biggest liar I've ever met or you've been through a hell of a lot and deserve a chance to get back on your feet. But go straight there. We'll be keeping an eye out for you."

I heaped praise on them and drove my unregistered, unwarranted vehicle about 100 km down to Cobden along the main highway. The shocks were shot, the brakes weren't crash hot and the steering operated like a drunk sow. It was a white-knuckled ride far below the speed limit but I arrived, shaken not stirred, at Cobden. It took the rest of my money and a crash course in mechanics to get the jalopy road worthy, warranted and registered, but a week later I was off to audition for third horn in the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra.

I was no more than five minutes out of Greymouth when I was stopped by the Police. They gave me a grin, a big thumbs up and waved me off.

I won the audition by the bye.

West Coast Police; no other breed quite like them.

1907

By *Torquil Arbuthnot*

As 2007 draws smoothly to a close I thought members might want to know what was happening one hundred years ago.

On 18th March 1907 Sweden's first and only train robbery took place. Other momentous events in 1907 included the introduction of taximeters in London cabs, and Baden-Powell leading the first scout camp on Brownsea Island.

On 1st June Colin Blythe, playing for Kent, took 17 wickets for 48 runs against Northamptonshire at Northampton in one day. It is the best analysis ever recorded for a county cricket match (or for a single day's bowling), and was not bettered in first-

class cricket until 1956.

Edward VII was on the throne of Great Britain, while abroad Franz Joseph I held down Austria-Hungary, Leopold II ruled the Belgians, and Alfonso XIII kept an eye on the Spaniards. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (Liberal party) was PM while across the pond Theodore Roosevelt (inventor of the teddy-bear) sat in the White House.

Notable 1907 births included actor and Olympic swimmer Buster Crabbe (famous for playing Flash Gordon); the poet W. H. Auden (famous for scuttling off to America at the start of World War II); Katharine Hepburn (famous for wearing trousers and talking as if she had lockjaw); Laurence Olivier (famous for playing demented Nazis in films); John Wayne (famous for his funny walk); Leslie Charteris (famous for writing *The Saint* series of books); and actress Fay Wray (famous for being King Kong's girlfriend). People who popped their clogs in 1907 include Chappist writer Joris-Karl Huysmans (author of *À Rebours* [Against Nature] and *Là-Bas* [Down There]) and Klara Hitler (mother of the German corporal).



Piccadilly Circus as it looked in 1907

Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* was published in 1907, as were E. M. Forster's *The Longest Journey*, John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Tom Kitten*, and a very early P. G. Wodehouse novel, *Not George Washington*.

In 1907 the Nobel Prize for literature went to Rudyard Kipling, "in consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration which characterize the creations of this world-famous author".



CLUB NOTES

Don't Be Tied Down By Mediocrity

I am pleased to be able to report that the special consignment of NSC Club ties has now been released by Customs & Excise and the Vice Squad and has made it to our South London distribution centre. If you have pre-ordered and paid for one of these handsome items then—if you live in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—you should have received it already. Members living Abroad may find it takes a little longer to arrive depending on the prevailing trade winds.

We still have about 25 ties left, so if you're a Member of the Club and fancy acquiring one, please get in touch with Mr Hartley. They are £15 each (plus another pound if you'd like us to mail it to you, or £2 if you live abroad). There is a photo of one of these ties in all its lush splendour on the Membership page of the website.

What a splendid Christmas present they would make for a fellow Club Member.

Telegram Appeal

Most, if not all, of you will be aware of one of our past Grand Raffle prize donators **Imperial Telegrams** and the sterling service they supply. They will also be providing some prizes for this year's Christmas Party.

Now they have asked us to help them in return and in a way they know will appeal to the Club. They write...

We have recently altered our website and would like to post up a number of telegram examples to show customers, in detail, our Imperial Telegrams. Some of the orders we receive are truly hilarious (and in some cases, rude and extremely naughty!), but because of their content and our customer confidentiality we sadly cannot use these. Could the Club Members come to our rescue and suggest half a dozen or so messages? I'm sure they'll enjoy the challenge!

In return, and after we have photographed these, we will forward the messages to the originators or to named recipients. This will then appear on both our website and our MySpace page.

So there you go fellows, a truly interesting challenge with benefits for all. Get your brains working, mop those fevered imaginations and get some ideas into me at this address. I suggest you check out the Imperial Telegrams website at www.imperialtelegrams.co.uk so you can see the text limitations, etc.

Please get your winning suggestions in by 5pm on 10th December at the very latest.

The Burlesque Brunch

Our first co-operative venture and a sure-fire way to beat the holiday blues: spend all day in the pub watching ladies in states of undress. Full details below in the Events section but a Newsflash has just arrived from Miss

Tenacity Flux, our co-organiser:

“We’re listed in Time Out! The lovely people at Time Out thought we were such a good idea, they have listed us in their social club section, so for the first time ever I am officially a box office—so ring now to book your tickets! 01707 656531!”

The Southern Chapter Journals

By Actuarious

Three meetings have now been held down here on the sunny South Coast and although one can, at best, describe them as a limited success there is no doubting that those who have turned up thoroughly enjoy themselves. The attendance may be described as either “exclusive” or “sparse” depending on just how charitable one is feeling.

The first, way back in June 2005 (ah, those mad, carefree far off days of yesteryear) was attended by myself, the Brogueadier and Ernest, Scion of Hallamshire-Smythe. My companions were so affected by this great cultural event that one of them ran off to the Raj to dig large holes, whereas the other, presumably in a fit of despair—knowing that he may never again experience such sublime banter—shed weight like a super-model with amoebic-dysentery.

Only I maintained a fragile hold on sanity, faced as we were with a lifetime of cultural darkness in what seemed, in comparison, a bland and featureless World.

Hope is at hand though with a further two meetings held within the last couple of months. With a regular schedule set—First Tuesday of the Month, “The Old Cross” in Chichester, 7.30pm—only a fool could miss it by error. The first was attended by the delightful Miss G-M, two prospective new Members (who fully intend to join us in London for the Christmas bash) and myself. We

had a marvellous time and three hours passed in witty banter the like of which has not been seen in Chichester since before the war. Now truly the spirit of the weekend parties in the provinces has been recaptured, the easy and intelligent conversation along with tall stories and much laughter.

The second meeting promised more, with De Rennes voicing his intent to join us but, unfortunately due to not being able to tell the time, he was a no show. Likewise our new friends were stymied in their hopes to repeat the triumph of a scant month before. However, Miss G-M and myself were honoured to welcome the Sheridan Club Registrar. Obviously much that was discussed is covered by the Official Secrets Act but I can reveal that he is a thoroughly charming and affable fellow.

Despite our reduced numbers the city was once more lit up with the spark of sophistication and another three hours were gone in but the batting of a single, elegant eye. If you would care to join us at our up-and-coming meetings then you are more than welcome. Apart from our immediate locality please remember the South Coast is a mere ten years of global warming away from London. Just one thing—if in doubt, ask an adult to tell you the time.

Honorary Membership

May I repeat the call for Members to suggest worthy public figures to be considered as Honorary Members of the New Sheridan Club. So far we have had suggestions for Mr Stephen Fry (vetoed by Chairman Arbuthnot as Fry stole a joke from him) and Mr James May, a grease-monkey with long hair from the small screen.

I have to remind Members that the dead and imaginary *cannot* be put forward for this honour.

Murder, Mystery and Mince Pies At Sheridan Towers!

Saturday 15th December
Cellar Bar, The Penderel's Oak, 283 High
Holborn, London

7pm–1am

Admission: Free to NSC Members; £3 to
non-Members (which may be offset against
Membership costs if you join on the night)

The New Sheridan Club invites you to Sheridan Towers for their Christmas Party. This time we're having a country house murder mystery theme. Think Agatha Christie, Hercule Poirot, Sherlock Holmes and Cluedo. Think cyanide in the vols-au-vent and sinister-but-fiercely-loyal blowpipe-wielding manservants in the aspidistra.

There will be music and entertainments—we have already secured the New Sheridan Barbershop Quartet, singing songs about murder, and champion performance poet Niall Spooner-Harvey will attempt to follow his tour de force at our summer party The Last Gasper. There will also be a rare performance by Mr B. The Gentleman Rhymer.

There will be competitions and silly things to do, including our very own murder mystery for you to solve by the end of the evening for a fabulous special prize. There will, of course, be the unmissable Grand Raffle, with free entry to all Members, including those who join up on the night.

For another mini-competition, go to the NSC website Events page and click on the link to the back of the flyer that we are using to promote this event. There is a composite mugshot made up of parts of the faces of five famous murderers. If you can identify the murders you could win a prize.

And of course there will be eating and drinking, badinage and backstabbing, garrottes in the flower beds and blunt instruments in billiard room.

Watch for late-breaking news...

Just some of the prizes on offer:

A deerstalker hat from **James Lock of St James's** plus an enormous magnifying glass

A pair of tickets to see *The Mousetrap* at St Martin's Theatre

Sherlock Holmes: The Definitive Collection seven-DVD boxed set of all the Basil Rathbone flicks

A bottle of *Poison* perfume by Christian Dior

A *Cluedo Nostalgia Edition* board game—the proper old design in a handsome wooden box

A copy of *Poisons: From Hemlock to Botox and the Killer Bean of Calabar* by Peter Macinnis

An Agatha Christie computer game—see through Poirot's eyes!

Two murder mystery dinner party games: *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Silver Bullet* and Agatha Christie's *A First Class Murder*, each with integral DVD

A set of Agatha Christie graphic novels

Two free telegrams from Imperial Telegrams

A set of Penguin Classics murder mystery mugs

An axe

Plus: *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Dandy* by Ian Kelly; Clarissa Dickson

Wright's autobiography *Spilling the Beans*; *Things I Wish My Mother Had Told Me* by Lucia van der Post (an etiquette guide for the ladies); an encyclopedia of British eccentrics; *The Lost Art of Being a Man*; *Every Woman's Luck Book* (how to choose a man by the way he sits, the lobes of his ears, etc)

Other Events Happening Soon...

The Burlesque Brunch

Sunday 2nd December

11am–11pm

The Punch Tavern, 99 Fleet Street, London
EC4Y 1DE

Tickets: Day ticket including brunch £26, which must be ordered in advance from here; half day ticket from 2.30 (no brunch) £13, which can be ordered in advance or purchased on the door.

Special offer for NSC

Members: quote your Membership number (which is stamped illegibly on your Membership Card) when you order and you may purchase **two day tickets for the price of one.** Moreover, you will also receive a free **£5 cocktail voucher.** (I am told that if, for some reason, you're not interested in a cocktail, then you may spend your voucher on cake instead.)

A cooperative venture between the Club and the scrumptious Miss Tenacity Flux, a talented burlesque performer, as well as being a keen chef. Your ticket buys you The Morning After That's Better Than the Night Before™, a 12-hour assault on your senses, sanity and self-control. The day begins with a hearty brunch from 12pm to 2pm (see menu below). When you order your ticket you will be asked to choose or, if you prefer, you can simply indicate your feelings about meat and they will choose for you.

During brunch there will be a table-to-table fashion show of vintage-style lingerie designed by the sublime Miss Sophie Jonas (funny how you never see her in the same room as Miss Flux...) and, I'll warrant, much dabbling at fevered brows with spotted handkerchiefs. During the afternoon there will be burlesque performers, as well as another fashion show, this time of corsetry and jewellery.

We will be graced by the divine form of Miss Crimson Skye, topping

the bill fresh from her success at the Edinburgh Fringe. Wait, there's more—burlesque lovely and poetess extraordinaire Miss Stella Plumes will also caress the stage with her heavenly being. It's all very hush-hush but a little bird tells me: "Don't leave till we throw you out—she'll be coming out again!" And completing the trinity of our three Graces is the embodiment of nostalgic sauciness, Li'l Miss Chievous.

As if there weren't enough, there will also be a "Not Cricket" pub quiz, plus the spinning of vintage shellacs into the night courtesy of DJ Pandora. More details, terms, tantalising daguerrotypes and ticket-purchase information in the "Cornucopia" section of Miss Jonas's site, www.sophiejonasdesigns.co.uk.

MENU

Peach melba smoothie served with an oatmeal and sultana cookie (For an early-morning sharpener, a shot of white rum in your smoothie is an extra £2.50!)

—

Traditional English breakfast with organic, free-range sausages and bacon provided by Somerset Farm (www.somersetfarmdirect.co.uk)

or

Kedgeree: a rich, spiced dish flavoured with smoked haddock, topped with a soft poached egg

or

A huge potato cake, crispy on the outside, fluffy on the inside, topped with char grilled courgette, aubergine and tomato, with a creamy mushroom sauce and an egg on top

—
Your choice of brunch cakes: either cranberry, chocolate chip and orange citrus zesty; or apple and cinnamon with pecan crunch crust

Cheesecakes

—
Boundless tea and coffee served through out

Cocktails available to buy from 11am

Meeting of the Southern Chapter

Tuesday 5th December

8pm–11pm

*The Old Cross, 65 North Street, Chichester
PO19 1LP (01243 785 029)*

Admission: Free

The Southern Chapter of the Sheridan Club is planning to rendezvous for a few drinks. Arrangements sound rather hazy—your best bet is to check the “Southern Chapter Rallying Cry” thread on the www.sheridanclub.co.uk Chaproom.

Loss, An Evening of Exquisite Misery

Friday 7th December

10pm–3am

*The London Pigeon Fanciers Association
(Deceased), Upstairs at 6/7 Great Newport
Street, London WC2H.*

*Tickets £10 in advance (from
www.thelasttuesdaysociety.org) and
possibly on the door too*

Dress: Decaying Beauty

Viktor Wynd once again invites you to wallow in aesthetic melancholy. There is likely to be some oddball entertainment plus Addams-esque DJs playing gloomy tunes. Traditionally there is onion chopping at midnight

and the place is usually decorated like a set from a Peter Greenaway film.

Frock Me! Vintage Fashion Fair

Sunday 9th December

11am–5.30pm

*Chelsea Town Hall, King's Road, Chelsea,
London SW3 5EZ*

*Admission: £3 (£1.50 students, children
under 16 free)*

Over 50 exhibitors will gather from all over the country (and a couple from France too) to sell you all manner of old clobber from Victorian underwear to 1950s corsets, from Edwardian smoking jackets to feather fans. More details at www.frockmevintagefashion.com. Followed by...

Frock Me! On the Dance Floor

Sunday 9th December

8pm–11pm

*Chelsea Town Hall, King's Road, Chelsea,
London SW3 5EZ*

*Admission: £8 (£6 students) with a £3
discount for full-paying visitors to Frock Me!
during the day*

Following on from the day's fashion fair, an evening of vintage music and dance. They say: “Take a step back to a time of exciting rhythms and innocent fun. Mingle with 1920s flappers, dance with dapper suited dandies; gyrate to mad gypsy jazz rhythms; lose yourself in the hypnotic beat and magic melodies of a world you thought could never return, with the red hot Brighton based swing band The Magic Number.”

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IF YOU HAVE any ideas or suggestions for Club events or articles for this Newsletter, then please get in touch with Mr Scarheart. We are also happy to promote events you yourself are involved with, or which you simply think would appeal to other Members.

Until next time, Chumrades.

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